

# DIALOGUE OF THE HERMITS

(Duet)

By

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I

Ice on the lake;  
Air, dry; and the moon...

There, it rises;  
And the sun, too; it was there.  
The morning sky, set alight  
With a red-orange glow:  
Across the icy lake, it seems  
As the face of God veiled,  
Beneath the frigid mist,  
And wind blown snow.

This fine powder, a crystal dust,  
Settles but a moment on naked branches...  
There for a moment, before the blast...  
So, comes the winds.

Scattered are we, with the winds.

To cling to what? - To the Earth?  
To the trees? To each other?!

Carried aloft, and our delicate forms  
Shattered... Melted...  
Then, comes the night;  
We become a brittle glaze.

Yesterday, a sunset before a flawless night:

The clean, cold air;  
Trees cut gashes into purple;  
Cold, black fingers receded into darkness;  
And the stillness... An hour passed...

Over the mountains there is a light, then  
The full moon illuminated the scene in  
Pure white, like day in white, the snow-  
Glowing white!

Throughout the night, all was glowing.

Yes! This is what I have been waiting for:  
The prelude to the flawless day; a whisper;  
Soon, the twilight of the morning.

It is once a year - a whisper - passing,  
Like an echo in the mountains from afar.  
One perfect day can slip away without us knowing  
What we've lost. Yet, when we grasp it  
All is ours!

Forgotten not; for only then,  
Life and truth are one.

To reflect on years past is a pleasure.  
Now, with this day, as it unfolds,  
I will keep in mind the happy time  
Spent in quiet seclusion on the hillside,  
By a lake-

Where first I knew a perfect day.

## II

Each winter, I put aside all noise and strife,  
And run away...

To the quiet woods, where winter drives away  
All slothful triflings...  
For here nature has  
A brutal way:  
Death and beauty, a single face;  
What is primal is all essential:  
Survive!

Fire is life!

## I

Only he who tends the flames understands life:  
To eat and breathe, to share and love,  
To die... To give scope to great thoughts!  
For it is real power; it is universal,  
Elegantly simple, unquestionably true.

## II

Where there is fire, we find mankind gathered.

I tend the fire on this frigid night, as before;  
Set the table, as every day for countless years;  
And light the lamps when we awake in darkness.  
Then, for a while, I write... Till I remember.

## I

So much paper! How many years of tireless scribbling,  
To no ends; for who, but me, will read it?

## II

I labored long to earn this freedom!  
My time is mine alone.  
But here, life is pure and unencumbered,  
Is there anything left to do?

## I

To wait for the next flawless day, old friend?

## II

My icy abode is a watchman's hut  
That stands before the gates of heaven-  
A realm, as yet, I am unwilling to enter:  
For living men have work to do, and mine  
Is left undone... The hours pass...  
The years consume all to smoldering ash.

## I

When the flawless days have past,  
And the ice begins to melt,  
Gathering my earthly spoils in hand,  
I will take my boat across the lake.  
Resuming the work of men, I will  
Scribble words that must be read.

## II

How the illusion appears seductive!  
Absurdity and Emptiness - unsettling,  
Resting in the bosom of Community.  
Repetitious and banal - listening,  
Attentive to half-truths and misconceptions.

## II (cont.)

Remember the pain?  
Remember the rejection;  
And the chill of age?

Fire is life... Did I say that?

## I

How strange it is...  
'This night;  
'This perfect night:  
A unity of contradictions.  
The night within our souls.

Uncertainty haunts it - no fire to warm;  
No light, even from the charred remains  
Of a past that knew life's sweet bitterness.

## II

Flawless days have dulled my aspirations.  
Yet, I am wise to be afraid of the black thoughts  
And empty promises of those that live beyond the forest.

Opaque clouds of mist and snow block out  
That which harms, and excites desire.

Now! To set alight with white hot blaze  
A furnace belching hungry tongues;  
Searing, too, its very walls;  
Soon the forest has turned to ash;  
And the lake begins to boil!  
Metal ready for the forge,  
Wrested from the blinding glow-

## II (cont.)

Take my advice, wanderer!

You had reason to leave that hell,  
That sweaty pit of unwashed souls!  
Who may sojourn with the corrupt  
Without infection from their foul breath,  
Or the bitter sting of their caress?

Back to the world, you say?!

## I

Yes...  
For a while...

## II

For a while, he says...  
While the World rages!

See their light, their splendid world... their Glory!  
In the darkness, its light shines bright for all to see;  
In the light of day, it pales to nothing... and watch!  
In the darkness still... such glory is fleeting,  
And passes in a flash!